

Bridge Inspection

Bridges are an essential part of Cincinnati's transportation network, linking roadways and communities. Timely maintenance is critically important for the safety and welfare of the traveling public. The Department of Transportation and Engineering (DOTE) is the city agency primarily responsible for inspecting, maintaining, and improving the transportation system within the City of Cincinnati. The Bridge Program is the specific program, within DOTE, charged with the responsibility of maintaining the bridges within this transportation system

In conformance with state law, every bridge in Cincinnati is inspected on an annual basis. Excepting interstate highway bridges inspected by the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT), DOTE Bridge Program personnel annually inspect every bridge in Cincinnati that supports a public roadway or crosses over or under a public roadway. These inspections are performed in accordance with the guidelines specified in the ODOT Bridge Inspection Manual. The objectives of these inspections are to:

1. Locate and determine the extent of any structural weaknesses or damage so that appropriate corrective actions can be taken to ensure public safety.
2. Provide a current information base on the condition of bridges within Cincinnati so that maintenance, repair, and replacement projects can be programmed efficiently.
3. Satisfy state and federal laws and regulations.

The ODOT Bridge Inspection Manual defines a bridge as "Any structure, including supports, of 10 feet or more clear span or 10 feet or more in diameter on, above, or below a highway." During the 2005/2006 inspection season (which began in the winter of 2005 and was concluded in the spring of 2007), DOTE Bridge Program personnel inspected a total of 287 bridges. Two Ft. Washington Way Viaduct bridges, eastbound and westbound Ft. Washington Way over Third Street and Eggleston, were inspected by ODOT. Based upon maintenance responsibility, these 289 bridges are divided into the following eight categories:

1. **City (DOTE) Bridges** (69 bridges): Vehicular and pedestrian bridges owned by the City and maintained by the Department of Transportation and Engineering.
2. **County Bridges** (67 bridges): Vehicular bridges within City limits that support either U.S. Routes, State Routes, or other improved roads which are of general and public utility running into or through Cincinnati. The Department of Transportation and Engineering maintains these bridges for Hamilton County by contractual agreement. Hamilton County funds work performed on these bridges.
3. **Ft. Washington Way Bridges** (5 bridges): Bridges over Ft. Washington Way constructed with the Ft. Washington Way reconstruction project. The Department of Transportation and Engineering shares maintenance responsibility for these bridges with ODOT.

4. **City (Skywalk) Bridges** (21 bridges): Central Business District pedestrian bridges on the skywalk system owned by the City. The Department of Public Services and property owners adjacent to the bridges maintain these bridges. Generally, the Department of Transportation and Engineering is responsible for the major rehabilitation of these bridges.
5. **City (Other) Bridges** (12 bridges): Unique City owned structures located on, over, or under a roadway that technically qualify as bridges. Various City agencies including: Stormwater Management Utility, the Park Board, the Recreation Commission, and Cincinnati Public Schools maintain these bridges.
6. **Kentucky Bridges** (3 bridges): Portions of bridges that span the Ohio River and end in Cincinnati. The Kentucky Transportation Cabinet owns and maintains these bridges.
7. **Railroad Bridges** (62 bridges): Railroad bridges that cross over or under public roadways. CSXT, CIND, RailAmerica, Norfolk-Southern, and SORTA own and maintain these bridges.
8. **Private Bridges** (50 bridges): Privately owned vehicular, pedestrian, and utility bridges that cross over or under public roadways. The applicable private owners maintain these bridges.

Bridges that are part of the Interstate Highway System, including City streets and rail lines over the interstate routes, are not inspected by DOTE Bridge Program personnel. ODOT is responsible for the inspection of these bridges and for the structural maintenance of those that are not railroad bridges.